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Viewing cable 06BUENOSAIRE625, ARGENTINA POLITICAL ROUNDUP FOR MARCH 17

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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#06BUENOSAIRE625.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BUENOSAIRE625	2006-03-17 18:57	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Buenos Aires

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1362537-la-ficcion-de-los-carteles-extranjeros>

VZCZCXYZ0039
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBU #0625/01 0761857
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 171857Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3859
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 5427
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 1311
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 5219
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0868
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR 4045
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 1798
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 1663
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 5414
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 5028
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0174
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0044
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHNA/DEA WASHDC PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA POLITICAL ROUNDUP FOR MARCH 17

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 0451

[1](#)B. BUENOS AIRES 0497

[1](#)C. BUENOS AIRES 0562

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for Reasons 1.4 (B)(D).

[1](#)1. (U) Reftels and other Mission reporting available at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/buenosaires>

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Acevedo Steps Down from Tumultuous Governorship
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[1](#)3. (SBU) The Governor of Santa Cruz Province, Sergio
Acevedo, abruptly resigned on March 15 for what he claimed
were ""strictly personal reasons."" Acevedo declined to give a
press conference, answer questions or give any further
justification for his departure. This unanticipated and
unexplained mid-term resignation has led to much speculation.

The most frequently reported hypotheses center around
several high profile social and political incidents that
occurred in his province in recent months. Incidents such as
the controversy surrounding the repatriation of provincial
funds from Swiss banks (deposited by Acevedo,s predecessor,
President Kirchner, just before the 2001 economic crash), the

conflict with oil and gas workers in February (Reftel A) - which involved roadblocks, salary demands, one killed police officer and a heavy Gendarmeria presence) and President Nestor Kirchner,s apparent reluctance to associate himself with the governor recently, have all played into theories as to what precipitated the resignation. Vice-governor Carlos Sancho will replace Acevedo. (COMMENT: Others cite the infighting between Kirchner insiders, Local Secretary Carlos Zannini, Minister of Planning Julio De Vido and Acevedo. Sources report that De Vido has been keen on ousting Acevedo as a means to position himself for his run at the Governorship in 2007. Acevedo told DCM the morning after his resignation that pressure from Buenos Aires (i.e. President Kirchner and Casa Rosada officials) made it impossible for him to govern the province and comply with his mandate as governor. The resignation of Acevedo narrows Kirchner's already limited circle of advisors and removes from the scene one of Kirchner's more honest and pro-U.S. officials. END COMMENT.)

14. (U) In related news, the salary demands first heard at the Las Heras oil workers protests in Santa Cruz, appear to have had their desired effect: on March 15 the GOA announced that in April the taxable income floor will be raised to 2400 AR pesos (estimated 800 US dollars) per month for single people and 3200 AR pesos (estimated 1066 US dollars) for married couples.

Narcotics Update: That which was lost is now found

15. (C) On March 18, responding to an anonymous phone tip the Federal Police searched a shipping container bound for Spain looking for cocaine. A cursory search of the container failed to turn up any narcotics, but after a second call the Federal Police completely unloaded the container and discovered between 300 and 350 kilos of cocaine concealed inside a shipment of frozen fish. Gendarmeria General Anibal

Maizteguai confirmed to DEA that the shipment included the 160 kilos of cocaine that the Gendarmeria had previously lost during a botched controlled delivery operation. He asserted that the seizure contained the exact number of identically wrapped packets bearing the same seal as the lost cocaine, and agents who worked that case were even able to identify the incisions they had made on some of the packets to test for purity prior to the controlled delivery operation.

(COMMENT: If as seems likely, the cocaine is indeed the 160 kilos lost during the recent controlled delivery, this could help defuse press criticism regarding the botched operation. News sources and pundits have loudly criticized the handling of the controlled delivery while largely ignoring the fact that eight of the nine suspects in that case are already in custody. END COMMENT.)

16. (C) The Federal Police believe the seizure is related to the February 23 seizure in Argentina of 200 kilos in a similar shipment (Reftel B) and the March 9 seizure of 400 kilos located in frozen fish by Spanish authorities following information provided by GOA law enforcement. Also of note, the cocaine not believed to be part of the control deliver bore the marking common to the Salta based Motok family. The Motok family, the second biggest narcotics transportation crime group based in Argentina, was a major target of the DEA funded Northern Border Task Force (NBTF) and has been largely dismembered. (COMMENT: The fact that this seizure appears to connect three of the highest-profile narcotics investigations of the year serves to illustrate the complex and interconnected nature of narcotics smuggling operations in Argentina. END COMMENT.)

Telerman Takes the Helm

17. (U) On March 13, Jorge Telerman was formally sworn in as Mayor of Buenos Aires, following the March 7 vote in the Buenos Aires legislature to remove Anibal Ibarra from office.

(Reftel C) In his inaugural speech, Telerman acknowledged the ""weaknesses of the State"" that allowed the Cromagnon tragedy that precipitated the downfall of his predecessor. Telerman praised President Kirchner and the Buenos Aires legislature. Telerman also thanked on several occasions his political ""teacher and father,"" 1980s Peronist Party (PJ) strongman Antonio Cafiero, who brought Telerman into politics. Vice President Daniel Scioli, several Cabinet members, and a host of Peronist leaders from the Capital and Buenos Aires province were in attendance.

18. (U) Telerman has announced he plans to form a cabinet modeled on the cabinets of the provincial governors. His nominations are largely all Kirchneristas or from Ibarra's team, including Raul Fernandez as Secretary General, Donato Spacavento as Minister of Health, Javier Gonzalez Fraga as Production Minister, and Diego Gorgal as Minister of Government.

19. (C) Bio Note: In the 1970s, Jorge Telerman was active in the Communist Youth Federation, along with former Mayor Anibal Ibarra. Telerman started his career as a journalist in the 1980s on ""Badia y Compania"" TV show on Channel 13. Through his personal friendship with Antonio Cafiero, who he met in 1981, he became Cafiero's spokesman when he was Governor of Buenos Aires province (1987-1991). He later served under Foreign Minister Guido di Tella in the Menem administration. He became Menem's Ambassador to Cuba in 1998. In 1999, he served as Eduardo Duhalde's spokesman and campaign advisor during Duhalde's 1999 presidential campaign.

Telerman was one of two Peronists that Anibal Ibarra incorporated into his administration when he became Buenos Aires Mayor in 2000, with Telerman serving as Ibarra's Secretary of Communication (July 2000-2003). Telerman ran on

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Ibarra's reelection ticket as the Deputy Mayor and head of the City Secretariat of Social Development (mid-2003) Nov. 2005). Since November 14, 2005 Telerman has been the acting

Mayor of Buenos Aires. Jorge Telerman was born November 29, 1955 in Buenos Aires City. He is married and has children.

¶10. (C) Although Jorge Telerman has long been active in the Peronist Party, he has had difficult relationship with the current head of the Buenos Aires City branch of Peronism, Cabinet Chief Alberto Fernandez. His friction with Fernandez and his reputation for independence has earned him the moniker of "Non-PJ Peronist," a characterization that Telerman does not deny. Telerman recently told the Ambassador that he does not consider himself a Peronist, but does have good relations with the Buenos Aires Peronists.

Misiones Province in Flames

¶11. (U) On March 13, a group of 3,000 farmers and forestry workers in the central Misiones town of San Vicente vandalized the town hall, demanding that Mayor Luis Benitez be removed from office. Although these protesters were not professional piqueteros responding to a larger piquetero organization or leader, as we have seen in other instances, they did employ the same tried and true tactics: the protesters stormed the municipal building and adjacent police station with sticks and stones, set it on fire and obstructed firefighters, access to the blaze. The day of riots left the building completely destroyed and the streets strewn with litter.

¶12. (U) The group of agricultural workers, which began as a collection of roughly 400 people demanding the federal subsidies last Tuesday, had grown to an angry mob of 3,000 within a week. They accuse Benitez of misappropriating \$99,000 pesos in federal subsidies disbursed to the municipality as federal relief for farmers following the severe droughts in January and February. They are also accusing Benitez of illicit enrichment, irregularities in his administration and neglect of local roads. Following the

arson seventeen people were arrested, though eleven were later released. The director of the local hospital confirmed 32 injured, the majority of which were police officers.

¶13. (U) Mayor Benitez has defended himself by blaming the media for "political intentionality," and strongly accused a local radio station and television channel of encouraging people for the last three months to "attack police and burn the town hall." The radio and television stations he blames are owned by a vocal opponent of his administration. Also pointing fingers in a similar direction is the secretary of the Agricultural Producers Association of Misiones (APAM), the group that initiated the demands a week ago. He says he thinks the main perpetrators were "government operatives supported by anti-Benitez councilmen" who infiltrated the group and provoked violence. The investigating judge that arrested the protesters has said that he too suspects "infiltrators" and that he will investigate at least one member of the city council. He has also said he will investigate the radio station for "instigating violence."

¶14. (U) The episode, while abnormally violent, is not the first symptom of political instability in the town. San Vicente has had seven mayors in the last eight years. Benitez's predecessor is a fugitive wanted on corruption charges, and even Benitez himself has previously been accused of corruption. In 2005 he was dismissed on charges of mismanagement of funds and illicit enrichment, only to regain his seat through appeal. Benitez has said publicly he will not resign, but has asked the city council for a leave of absence.

GUTIERREZ

=====CABLE ENDS=====